

GEO

Guyana Economic Opportunities

Development of Private Sector Organization Action Plans

A Summary of Activities

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I. Introduction

GEO's strategic-planning process aims at identifying PSOs' top advocacy goals and assisting PSOs to identify objectives, strategies, action plans and action steps that help PSOs meet their advocacy targets. The planning process uncovered problems and constraints in each PSO that sharply hamper advocacy capacities. Most significantly, many PSO-member businesses struggle financially. Moreover, business owners are completely dedicated to running their operations, leaving little time to participate in advocacy campaigns.

GEO therefore seeks to strengthen PSO advocacy capacities by concurrently strengthening PSOs institutionally. Effective PSO advocacy demands organizationally strong PSOs with commercially viable members. Organizationally strong PSOs are characterized by the following:

- An expanding membership;
- Addressing needs of individual members that, over time, enable members to participate more effectively in PSO affairs;
- Building financial strength;
- Creating action teams that involve delegation by PSOs' executives and enlarge member participation;
- Continuously enhancing internal capacities in technology and human resources;
- Assuring an open and impartial PSO administration and maintaining staff responsiveness to members; and
- Pursuing courses of action that strengthen members' enterprises in ways that add to the commercial strength of their communities.

PSO strategic plans that have been developed address all of the above areas given that each issue directly impacts an organization's advocacy capacity. This concurrent strengthening of PSOs institutionally also parallels Intermediate Result 4 of the GEO Project: increased services available to support small and microenterprises. The vast majority of PSO-member firms are small or micro-businesses.

Although PSOs are characterized with many shortcoming, none of these deficiencies stand alone. Each shortcoming is connected to one another. Building membership is linked to: improving a PSO's image; service menus; creating value for members; affordable dues for members; member business viability; and cooperation with other PSOs and members of such PSOs. Of critical importance is understanding that remedying institutional deficiencies relates directly to the ability of PSOs to effectively develop and manage advocacy campaigns.

II. Progress and Activities

The following list of interventions highlights the progress made by PSOs, in collaboration with GEO, during the previous four months, both in terms of general progress and PSO-specific activities.

A. General Progress

PSO strategic plans and action plans. Final strategic plans and action plans have been developed for all eight partner PSOs, resulting in an aggregate of 69 PSO goals.¹ Further, all eight action plans contain a total of 254 goals and approximately 800 action steps. To carry out the action plans, roughly 57 action-plan teams, consisting of approximately 140 team members, have been formed. All plans point to the development and implementation of 26 advocacy campaigns, 21 institution-building goals, and 22 goals combining both advocacy and institution-building activities.

Development of coalitions. The ability to form and maintain situational coalitions is an important aspect of advocacy. But alliances are based not only on commonality of purposes, but also on trust, confidence, reliability, and goodwill. Guyana's PSOs have virtually no history in forming cooperative alliances. Therefore, PSOs have been assisted to identify areas where a need for forming an alliance is obvious, but where issues involved are not critical. In short, GEO is working with PSOs to construct confidence-building alliances, to begin familiarizing PSOs with one another, thus demonstrating the practicality of alliances as well as the ability to prepare proposals both in unison and in a timely fashion. As an example, GEO helped several regional chambers of commerce jointly prepare a proposal to the government of Guyana (GOG) concerning the chambers' involvement in future "Guyana Nights" events.

Internet awareness seminar and Internet and computer training for PSO staff and members. GEO has collected substantial data on the Internet needs of PSOs and their members. Findings need to be reconfirmed to ensure that PSOs and their members continue to believe the needs identified so far continue to address their requirements. Details on proposed Internet and computer training are contained in Annex A to this report.

Training program for PSOs on proposal writing. A formal training program in proposal writing has not yet been implemented. The GEO Chief of Party and the Private-Sector Advisor now believe it would be best to hire a short-term consultant for this task.

¹ See the GEO report entitled *Private Sector Organization Strategic Plans* to access these plans in their entirety.

B. PSO-Specific Activities

Berbice Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCDA). BCCDA has progressed on advocacy campaigns for the bridge across the Berbice River, development of the New Amsterdam Industrial Site, and representation on GOG boards.

Essequibo Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECCI). ECCI has already begun initial implementation of advocacy plans concerning investment promotion, human-resource improvements, and education activities.

Linden Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Development (LCICD). LCICD is “transitioning” from the planning stage to implementation of its advocacy plans. LCCID has already begun implementation on the Lethem highway advocacy issue. Additionally, GEO has assisted LCICD in proposal-writing training with respect to acquiring computers and office equipment from the British High Commission or alternatively from Banks DIH.

Rupununi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI; Lethem). GEO helped RCCI complete its strategic plan. Meetings in Lethem, which resulted in a subsequent meeting with heads of the Boa Vista and the State of Roraima (Brazil) Chambers of Commerce, plus other related activities, provided openings for RCCI to begin implementing its advocacy action plan regarding proposals for the road from Georgetown to Lethem. LCICD is also involved in this advocacy initiative. GEO also helped RCCI write a proposal and begin an advocacy campaign to strengthen relations with its regional democratic council (RDC).

Upper Corentyne Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UCCCI). UCCCI is beginning implementation on two issues indirectly linked to advocacy: a membership drive and proposal writing-training to obtain computer equipment from the British High Commission.

Forest Products Association (FPA). GEO is now working with FPA and a third party on determining the applicability of an existing forest inventory. The inventory ties into issues from certification to environmental advocacy initiatives.

Guyana Manufacturers Association (GMA). GEO and UCCCI combined efforts to begin the process of forging an alliance with GMA on the issue of launching a development bank.

Tourism & Hospitality Association of Guyana (THAG). Although THAG’s action plan has been completed, it is the only PSO that did not establish action plan teams. THAG is experiencing changes at both its institutional staff and presidential levels. Its members struggle individually to hang on until the tourism industry improves. Many tourism proprietors are confused about adequate product positioning, and they lack an understanding of what eco-tourism means. Many business owners in this sector also lack awareness of what competitiveness means as well as the capital necessary for enhancing their competitive positioning.

Proposal writing and hands-on training to meet specific needs of three chambers.

Implementation of proposal-writing training has begun for the Linden, Rupununi, and Upper Corentyne chambers of commerce. Initial activities have focused on building technological capacity and improving relations with RDCs. GEO assisted all regional chambers in coalition building by helping each chamber prepare a proposal outlining their ideas for assisting the GOG in promoting Guyanese products. Additionally, GEO has worked with the Linden and Rupununi chambers to construct an alliance and help write proposals designed to assure that these chambers have a voice in deliberations on important aspects of expanding commercial relations between Guyana and Brazil.

Arriving at advocacy initiatives most important to PSOs. All regional chambers have identified priorities associated with inadequate local infrastructure. This issue offers solid opportunities for standardization of advocacy and PSO-to-PSO collaboration. Therefore, GEO has worked with regional chambers to help them reach a consensus on their focusing collectively on a major effort advocating local infrastructure improvements, both for current commercial and social activities as well as for laying a competitive foundation for future investment-attraction initiatives.

GEO and its partner PSOs have agreed that GEO will be actively involved with each PSO in only one advocacy issue, in addition to the advocacy activities associated with local infrastructure improvements. Listed below are the top advocacy issues that each PSO has identified.

Table I: Top Advocacy Issues of Partner PSOs

PSO	Top Advocacy Issue
BCCDA	Gaining observer status at local and municipal government meetings
ECCI	Ensuring government responsiveness to local issues
LCICD	Focusing on completion of the road to Lethem, and resolving issues with unlicensed street vendors
RCCI	Focusing on completion of the road to Brazil, and resolving outstanding land tenure issues
UCCCI	Enabling improved and more equitable animal control
FPA	Developing a certification program and improved forest inventory
GMA	Providing access to financing at competitive rates, and reducing GOG red tape
THAG	Fostering more positive GOG involvement in advancing the tourism sector

As noted above, one of the key advocacy campaigns involves the development of an adequate highway connection from Linden to Lethem. This effort currently involves the Linden and Rupununi chambers, the Private Sector Commission (PSC), the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Industry, the Ministry of Transport and Hydraulics, and the chambers of commerce of the city of Boa Vista and the state of Roraima in Brazil. Annex C to this report provides a standardized advocacy format for PSOs, using the highway issue to demonstrate the use of this worksheet.

III. Problems

Few problems have been encountered to date. Bigger problems will arise in the future as the implementation of advocacy initiatives undoubtedly confronts the problem of PSO members becoming frustrated with the often slow pace of change resulting from such activities. At present, the biggest problems involve:

- Financially weak PSO-member businesses, which compels members to focus almost entirely on running their own businesses, resulting in the need to slow the pace of implementation.
- An unfamiliarity and apprehensiveness about delegating responsibility of action steps to member businesses, PSO staff, or action plan teams.
- A lack of understanding in some PSOs of the relevance of strategic plans as a tool for taking effective action.
- The difficulty some action teams have had in developing action steps.
- The under-utilization of PSO staff by PSO executives.
- The slowness of sector-specific PSOs to commence the strategic-planning process.
- Little history with multi-organization cooperation.
- Little experience with anything more than the vaguest concepts of the strategic-planning processes.
- Past negative experiences working with donors, leading many PSOs to question the chances for success of their current efforts.

IV. Immediate Future Plans

Sustained implementation of action plans should start as close to the beginning of August 2000 as possible. The regional chambers of commerce and THAG have faith in the effectiveness of the action plans; however, both GMA and FPA have a less positive outlook, perhaps due to their previous experience with donors or because of a desire to adhere to the *status quo*. That said, the leadership of GMA remains solidly behind GEO's approach to developing and implementing strategic plans.

A rapid launching of implementation will allow the PSOs to leverage the positive momentum they have created in developing their strategic plans. Furthermore, implementation in the face of upcoming national elections provides for greater possible rewards, seeing that politicians will be more amenable to the ideas proposed by PSOs.

Annex A:

Computer and Internet Training for PSO Staff and Members

A. Introduction

Training needs specified below apply to partner chambers of commerce only, and are not relevant to the three partner sector-specific associations: FPA, GMA, and THAG. Sector-specific PSOs have yet to allow the GEO project to meet directly with their member businesses, and thus precise training needs for the members of these PSOs remain unknown. With respect to the staff of FPA, GMA, and THAG, the Executive Director level at all three organizations appears proficient with computer and Internet technology. However, lower-level other staff at these organizations could most likely benefit from participating in GEO-sponsored computer and Internet training sessions.

For the five partner chambers of commerce, a needs assessment of computer and Internet skills has occurred through three distinct exercises: direct interviews in 1999 to identify training needs; subsequent meetings with members and full chambers for similar purposes; and an in-progress process reconfirming and adding to needs identified earlier.

Currently, UCCI, ECCI, and BCCDA have full-time staff, whereas RCCI and LCICD do not. RCCI and LCICD have identified action steps in quarters three and four of 2000 to obtain improved technology and hire qualified staff. Lacking staff or equipment will not necessarily prevent either RCCI or LCICD from participating in computer or Internet training by allowing certain members to attend events.

B. Computer and Internet Training For PSO Staff

1. Computer Training

Only ECCI and BCCDA currently own computers. Neither has access to the Internet, but staff of both produce business letters and maintain computer records concerning issues such as membership rolls and the payment of dues. Improving their current computer skills in order to gain a level of proficiency enabling demonstration to members of the basic benefits of word processing and document preparation would benefit both chambers.

The following are issues that should be covered in computer training courses:

- Charts
- Graphs
- Drawing
- Document-importing skills
- Spreadsheet familiarity
- Database capabilities

- More comprehensive record-keeping and access capabilities
- Basic inventory applications
- Maintaining mailing lists and exploiting mail-merge capabilities
- Newsletter production
- Computer faxing
- Modem operations
- Familiarity with basic accounting.

2. Internet Training

GEO's information technology specialist should begin at the most basic level of Internet training and progress to training that helps PSO staff address specific commercial needs of their members. The most appropriate venue for training would be the use of a centralized facility (e.g., CAGI or the private-sector center).

Table A-1 lists the principal PSO contacts for Internet training programs.

Table A-1: Principal PSO Contacts for Internet Training

PSO	President	Executive Director/Main Contact	Staff
Berbice Chamber	Ramdial Bhookmohan 64060	None	Cosmata Lindy 03-3324
Essequibo Chamber	Steve Hemraj 071-4699	None	Taj Ganpat 071-4310
Linden Chamber	Basil Jaipaul 04-6055	Jim Park 04-6494	None
Rupununi Chamber	Mohamed Khan 0672-2035	None	None
Upper Corentyne Chamber	Kumar Dudnauth 039-2212	None	Vineta Persaud 039-2340
Forest Products	Kurt Kisto 57121	Mona Byno 69848	Janice Crawford Vanessa Benn
Manufacturing	Sattaur Gafoor 75887	Inge Nathoo 74295	Verney Seymour Merlyn Martin
Tourism	Gerry Goveia 59648	Donna Shortt-Gill 50807	Tameka Sukhdeo

C. Computer and Internet Training For PSO Members

Interviews with members of regional chambers of commerce revealed that the vast majority of such enterprises do not own computers. Of the few that own computers, even fewer have Internet access. In total, approximately 90 percent of chamber members do not use computers.

When training PSO members, GEO's information technology specialist would have to move through generalized introductory training at a faster clip than with PSO staff. The business members with whom the consultant met maintain strong opinions concerning the types of skills that would be most useful, and have little time for long training sessions.

As opposed to training for PSO staff members, the most appropriate venue for training directed at PSO members would be within the offices of each particular PSO.

The following would be the most useful approach for conducting training for members of partner chambers of commerce:

- The GEO information technology specialist determines areas of training focus from each member's identified needs.
- The information technology specialist trains chamber personnel so that staff may act as training assistants for members.
- The information technology specialist conducts progressive training on two consecutive evenings at a local venue with Internet access.
- On day two, the information technology specialist visits chamber-member businesses to address individual needs. Visits to individual businesses would be held to less than one hour.
- On day three, the information technology specialist visits more member businesses to continue addressing individual needs.
- Chamber staff monitor members' computer and Internet issues on behalf of the information technology specialist, who would be available for necessary consultations that may arise.
- Once per quarter for the following three quarters, the information technology specialist would conduct follow-up training sessions based on problems identified via the monitoring activities of chamber staff.

The following is the recommended course for conducting training for members of sector-specific PSOs:

- The information technology specialist shares proposed curricula with PSO staff to solicit feedback on refining such curricula.
- The information technology specialist queries PSOs about the possible interest their members might have in participating in training courses.
- The PSOs arrange for focus groups with PSO members.
- Findings of focus groups shared with the information technology specialist for further refinement of curricula.
- Training is held.

D. Timing of Training

Staff training should begin during the last month of the third quarter of 2000. Member training should begin not sooner than the third month of the fourth quarter of 2000, continuing until early 2001.

Annex B: PSO Exchange Visits With Similar Organizations

A. Introduction

Conducting exchange visits with organizations similar to GEO's partner PSOs is a significant aspect of building the advocacy capacity of PSOs. Participants would learn from their counterparts abroad about raising revenue, membership drives, service menus, promotion and outreach, management, staff functions, and lobbying. The net result would include stronger members, larger PSOs, new advocacy practices, advocacy campaigns with a higher impact, and improved staff performance.

Following is an explanation of the kind of exchange visits the consultant believes will most benefit PSOs and their members.

B. PSO Exchanges

Visits most helpful to PSOs would involve visits to organizations having similar memberships. This will allow for the visits to cover four aspects of PSO operations: advocacy improvement, institutional strengthening, membership building, and staff functions and performance. For the best results, exchanges should be conducted in the United States, and would include key PSO staff, one or two members, and key GOG officials to serve as observers. Possible locations for exchange visits, both in the United States and in other countries, include the following:

Table B-1: Possible Locations for PSO Study Tours

Location of Exchange Chamber	Rationale
Florida, Texas, Louisiana or California	Rice, sugar, timber production
Colorado	Single industry town that has revitalized its economy: Leadville
Texas and Georgia	Good and bad of border-town growth (Laredo) and peanut production
Santo Domingo	Very strong, well-run AMCHAM
Trinidad	Strong economic growth, good business climate
Costa Rica	Succeeded in attracting investment
El Salvador	Very aggressive chamber
A MERCOSUR member	Gain understanding of the potential of joining MERCOSUR
Ireland	Fast-growing economy tied to EU access analogous to Guyana proximity to MERCOSUR

C. PSO Exchange Visits Addressing Investment

Another important objective for conducting exchange visits concerns investment promotion. All of Guyana's regional chambers of commerce have expressed a desire to attract further investment to the geographic areas they represent. All would like to form alliances with GO-INVEST (Guyana Office of Export and Investment Promotion). Perhaps one aspect of their exchange visits could include discussions of the roles that PSOs play in attracting investment.

For THAG, a three-country study tour in Central America—involving Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica—would be most useful. These countries represent Guyana’s competitors in the tourism industry, all of which have realized significant gains from this sector. Tourism exchange visits could involve several key THAG staff and members, in addition to a Ministry of Trade, Tourism, and Industry observer.

D. Conclusion

Many views exist concerning the best manner to ensure an optimal exchange visit. A visit to virtually any acceptable organization would prove useful for Guyana’s PSOs.

E. Timing

Exchange visits should be carried out by the second quarter of 2001.

Annex C:
Advocacy Format Worksheet to Be Followed and Continually Updated Per Progress

Sample of Worksheet Used for Linden Chamber of Industry, Commerce, and Development (LCICD), Advocacy Goal 3: Completion of the Road to Brazil

Background information: When Sarne was President of Brazil, in the 1980s, the Brazilian government loaned Guyana US\$11 million for completion of the first phase of a road from Linden in the north of Guyana to Lethem, located on the Brazilian border. Brazil and Guyana talked about a second loan to complete phase two of the road, from Kurupakari to Mabura Hill, after phase one was completed. However, the second loan never materialized due to the fact that the World Bank directed Guyana not to borrow additional funds from Brazil to avoid risking a violation of existing-loan conditionalities. No other source of financing has yet been secured.

The head of the Boa Vista Chamber of Commerce in Brazil has indicated that the proposed road would save 14 days over the present method of sending freight to Boa Vista, Brazil, and 10 days to Manaus, Brazil. Freight currently travels via the Atlantic Ocean, up the Amazon River to Manaus, and is trucked subsequently to Boa Vista. Seventy freight trucks from Manaus arrive in Boa Vista each day.

RCCI and LCICD are being assisted by GEO in working with the Boa Vista Chamber of Commerce to develop additional economic information on commercial activities that would be generated by a Linden-Lethem-Takutu-Boa Vista highway capable of handling high-speed, heavy-freight trucks.

Who are the influential people and politicians (both local and national) involved in the process? Guyanese Ministers Xavier and Da Silva. Governor of the Brazilian state of Roraima.

What are the necessary steps for LCICD to move the issue in the way it wants? LCICD participated in the first meeting between the governments of Guyana and Brazil and the private sector in Boa Vista, Brazil, in April 2000. LCICD needs to establish an independent voice in discussions on the highway, and have aligned with RCCI to begin such a process. LCICD is moving to define the issues that are most important to it and is working with RCCI to enhance its impact. However, establishing its own voice will require building improved relations with GOG officials, reinforcing its incipient relations with the Boa Vista Chamber of Commerce, and continuing to provide thoughtful proposals.

RCCI is coordinating with LCICD to help the GOG keep its commitment to host a second meeting with the Brazilian private sector and government in Guyana, so as to begin plotting a course of action for construction of the road.

Who is responsible for bridges and roads? Are sewers, lights or other infrastructure improvements necessary? Minister Xavier holds this responsibility. In response to part two, many infrastructure considerations are involved for Linden. Within the next several months, following the second proposed meeting between the governments of Guyana and Brazil, LCICD will prepare a joint proposal for Minister Xavier to discuss infrastructure needs flowing from construction of the road.

Does anyone oppose LCICD's position? Who? Why? Amerindians along the proposed route of the road have stated opposition to constructing a highway. This group also states that the road is a violation of Amerindian rights.

Manaus authorities will likely oppose the road, as will ocean-shipping companies, long-shore men, and Brazilian freight companies

What is the regional government position on this issue? The regional government supports road construction and provided LCICD data for the latter's participation in the first road meeting held in Boa Vista, Brazil.

Who supports LCICD? Why? The GOG claims to support the road, but has been making such statements for 20 years while making only tangible progress on its construction. LCICD will make a stronger economic case for road, which will more effectively demonstrate the road's benefits to the GOG.

RCCI and BCCDA also support the road, as does the government of the Brazilian state of Roraima and the Boa Vista, Brazil, business community. These organizations support the road due to the prospect for enhanced income generation and employment.

How can the opposition be reached? LCICD plans to engage Amerindians and try to involve them in deliberations on the road. However, RCCI and LCICD may first develop some preliminary positions and meet with Amerindians to try to get a real understanding of their concerns.

For opposition by Brazilian interests, there will be strategy meetings with Brazilian counterparts in Boa Vista, Brazil, but Brazilian opposition must be handled by local organizations.

To whom will the opposition listen? Amerindians are unlikely to listen to the GOG. RCCI and LCICD will probe to see to whom the Amerindians may be inclined to listen.

What is the best way to sustain a campaign that mobilizes supporters and immobilizes opposition? LCICD and RCCI are developing a mobilization strategy at present that hinges on the reaction of other players (e.g., the GOG) to the proposals thus far put forward.

Should LCICD write letters? BCCDA is currently writing letters.

Should LCICD script telephone calls? Not yet.

Should LCICD prepare a position paper? Both LCICD and RCCI are developing position papers, which may be merged together at some point.

Should LCICD meet with various officials? Both LCICD and RCCI have met local government officials to present proposals for additional meetings.

Should LCICD prepare letters to or articles for major newspapers? Not yet.

Should LCICD purchase paid advertisements? Not yet.

Should LCICD prepare a series of news releases to the press? Not yet.

Should LCICD participate in radio or TV interviews? Not as of yet, although joint appearances may be organized later, if such appearances can be well-practiced and scripted.

Are there outsiders who might be influential in the process? Global competitors in engineering and construction of road projects may be influential allies, as could members of the donor community, economists, and individuals with experience in NAFTA transportation issues. The EU has already committed funds for a road feasibility study.

Should the LCICD effort appear broad based? LCICD is still not sure if the effort should be more broad-based than it currently is.